

A Gift from Papá Diego/Un regalo de Papá Diego

written by Benjamin Alire Sáenz

illustrated by Geónimo García

About the Book

Genre: Fiction

Format: Paperback, 40 pages

ISBN: 9781643790657

Reading Level: Grade 5–6

Interest Level: Grades 3–8

Guided Reading Level: T

Accelerated Reader® Level/Points:

English: 3.6/0.5

Spanish: 3.8/0.5

Lexile™ Measure: N/A

*Reading level based on the ATOS Readability Formula

Themes: Bilingual, Childhood Experiences and Memories, Families, Fathers, Fiction, Grandparents, Imagination, Latino/Hispanic/Mexican Interest, Mexico, Optimism/Enthusiasm, Spanish, Texas

Resources on the web:

leeandlow.com/books/a-gift-from-papa-diego

SYNOPSIS

Little Diego loves his grandfather, but they don't see each other often because Papá Diego lives in Mexico and Little Diego lives in Texas across the border. One day Little Diego's father gives him a pile of comic books that his father had when he was growing up. In those comic books Little Diego discovers Superman. Maybe if he was like Superman, then he could fly off to see his grandfather in Mexico! So Little Diego tells his mother that he wants a Superman outfit for his birthday. His parents buy him one, but, of course, Little Diego cannot fly. He's heart-broken. Still, because he has had the daring to imagine, a wonderful event occurs and he enjoys one of his happiest birthdays ever! Each illustration in Papá Diego was built out of terra cotta clay and painted with acrylic paints. This gives the illustrations a three-dimensional quality which kids will love!

All guided reading level placements may vary and are subject to revision. Teachers may adjust the assigned levels in accordance with their own evaluations.

BACKGROUND

El Paso/Chihuahua

From the author's note: El Paso (which in Spanish means the pass, like a pass over the mountains) is on the Rio Grande (Big River), which is the river that separates the state of Texas in the United States from the state of Chihuahua in Mexico. On the other side of the Rio Grande is la Ciudad Juárez which is named after the great president of Mexico, Benito Juárez, who many historians compare to Abraham Lincoln. The capital of Chihuahua is la Ciudad de Chihuahua which is 250 miles south of Juárez. Papá Diego lives in la Ciudad de Chihuahua.

Additional Information: Crossing the US/Mexican Border in El Paso/Juárez

There are six bridges across the Rio Grande that serve as border crossings between El Paso, TX and the city of Juárez, Mexico. See descriptions, photos, and webcams at <https://www.elpasotexas.gov/international-bridges>. United States citizens must show a passport book or card to cross the border into Mexico, or to re-enter the United States from Mexico. Mexican citizens who want to visit the United States need a Border Crossing Card, which is a type of visa. See more information at <https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/us-visas/tourism-visit/border-crossing-card.html>.

Superman

Superman ("The Man of Steel") is a character trademarked by DC Comics, created in 1938. Superman is the superhero alter ego of Clark Kent, a reporter from the fictional city of Metropolis. Find out more about Superman at the DC comics website: <https://www.dc.com/characters/superman>.

Additional note

Before reading this book, it is important to acknowledge that the topic of challenges related to crossing an international border may be triggering for students. While the child in the book experiences manageable sadness around being separated from his grandfather, the story may incite more intense feelings if students or their family members have had challenging immigration or refugee experiences, lived as undocumented immigrants, or had difficult separations from family members because of immigration challenges. Consider using the necessary resources to prepare and support students for hearing and discussing this story.

BEFORE READING

Prereading Focus Questions

(Reading Standards, Craft & Structure, Strand 5 and Integration of Knowledge & Ideas, Strand 7)

(Speaking & Listening Standards, Comprehension & Collaboration, Strands 1 and 2)

Before introducing this book to students, you may wish to develop background knowledge and promote anticipation by posing questions such as the following:

- Have you ever wished for a special gift? What was the gift? What happened? Did it turn out how you hoped or expected? How did you feel?
- Do you special friends or family who live far away? How do you feel when you're apart? How do you stay connected to them?

- Have you ever traveled to another country? A “border” is the line that divides one country’s land from another country. What do you know about crossing a border between countries?

You may want to have students journal their responses to these questions or pose a question as a KWL discussion and chart so that you can refer back to it throughout and after the reading of the book to further their thinking on the topic(s).

Exploring the Book

(Reading Standards, Key Ideas & Details, Strand 1; Craft & Structure, Strand 5; and Integration of Knowledge & Ideas, Strand 7)
(Speaking & Listening Standards, Comprehension & Collaboration, Strands 1 and 2)

Book Title Exploration: Talk about the title of the book, *A Gift From Papá Diego/Un regalo de Papá Diego*. Ask students what they think this book will most likely be about and whom the book might be about. What do they think might happen? What information do they think they might learn? What makes them think that?

Book Walk: Display the book and analyze the cover. What do students notice in the illustration? Take students on a book walk and draw attention to the following parts of the book: front and back covers, title page, bilingual text, glossary, author’s note, and author and illustrator biographies.

Read Author’s Biography: See the end of the book or end of this guide. What do you think the process is like to write a book for young readers? Why do you think Benjamin Alire Sáenz wrote this book for young readers—his first children’s book?

Read Illustrator’s Biography: See the end of the book or the end of this guide. What do you think the process is like to illustrate a book for young readers? Why do you think Geronimo Garcia chose to take on this work?

Encourage students to stop and jot in their reading notebooks during the reading when they: learn new information, have an emotional reaction or an idea, have a question, or see new words.

Have students write feeling(s) in their notebook during reading. After reading, ask students why they wrote that feeling down and have them write a journal entry about it. Have students complete one journal entry per each reading session.

Setting a Purpose for Reading

(Reading Standards, Key Ideas & Details, Strands 1–3)

Have students read to find out:

- What does the title mean: *A Gift From Papá Diego/Un regalo de Papá Diego*?
- What’s challenging for Little Diego in this story? How does he react to those challenges?
- How do others support Little Diego in this story? What does he learn?

Encourage students to consider why the author would want to share this story with young people.

VOCABULARY

(Reading Standards, Craft & Structure, Strand 4)

(Language Standards, Vocabulary Acquisition & Use, Strands 4–6)

(Speaking & Listening Standards, Comprehension & Collaboration, Strands 1 and 2)

The story contains several content-specific and academic words and phrases that may be unfamiliar to students. Based on students' prior knowledge, review some or all of the vocabulary below.

Encourage a variety of strategies to support students' vocabulary acquisition: look up and record word definitions from a dictionary, write the meaning of the word or phrase in their own words, draw a picture of the meaning of the word, create a specific action for each word, list synonyms and antonyms, and write a meaningful sentence that demonstrates the definition of the word.

Content Specific

tadpoles, countries, Chihuahua, "cross the border," Mexico, El Paso, Superman, comics, cape, steel, Clark Kent, green chiles, chiles rellenos, eavesdropping, "Las Mañanitas," guitar, champurrado, bischocos, magic lamp, winked, flautas, guacamole

Academic

sense, hope, imagined, vaguely, puzzled, suspiciously, hero, enchanted, stumble, complain, immediately, taunting, blurted, patient, reluctantly, interrupted, useless

Use the glossary at the back of the book to help build understanding of the Spanish words and phrases that are part of the English text. The accompanying author's note shares more about what it means to be bilingual.

AFTER READING

Discussion Questions

After students have read the book, use these or similar questions to generate discussion, enhance comprehension, and develop appreciation for the content. Encourage students to refer to passages and/or illustrations in the book to support their responses. **To build skills in close reading of a text, students should cite textual evidence with their answers.**

Literal Comprehension

(Reading Standards, Key Ideas & Details, Strands 1–3)

(Speaking & Listening Standards, Comprehension & Collaboration, Strands 1–3 and Presentation of Knowledge & Ideas, Strand 4)

1. What does Little Diego wonder at the start of the story? What does his father say to explain why Papá Diego can't visit often?
2. What does Little Diego wish he could do with Papá Diego?
3. What does Little Diego's father give him as a gift? Why were the comics important to him? How does Little Diego react to receiving the comic collection?
4. What does Little Diego imagine he could do if he could fly like Superman?
5. What birthday gift does Little Diego wish for?
6. How does Gabriella react to Little Diego's wish? What does she say? How does their mother respond?

7. How does Diego's family celebrate on the morning of his birthday?
8. What is the story of how Diego was born?
9. What happens when Diego opens his birthday present?
10. What happens when Diego goes into the kitchen? How does he react?
11. How does the story end?

Extension/Higher Level Thinking

(Reading Standards, Key Ideas & Details, Strands 2 and 3 and Craft & Structure, Strands 4 and 6)

(Speaking & Listening Standards, Comprehension & Collaboration, Strands 1–3 and Presentation of Knowledge & Ideas, Strand 4)

1. What's hard for Diego to understand about why his family and Papá Diego live far apart? Why do you think it's easier for the adults to accept? Does this situation remind you about anything from your own life? What's your connection?
2. Why do you think Diego's father decides to give Diego his comic book collection?
3. Why do you think Gabriella treats Diego the way she does? How might the story be different if it was told from Gabriella's point of view?
4. When Gabriella tells Mamá about Diego's secret wish to fly, why do you think she tells Gabriela to "be patient?" Why doesn't she warn Diego that he won't be able to fly?
5. How does imagining being able to fly help Diego? Why do you think he's so upset when he realizes the Superman suit doesn't actually let him fly?
6. How might the secret plans have been made for Papá Diego to visit for Diego's birthday? Why do you think Papá Diego chooses to make the journey?
7. Why do you think Diego feels like he'll "remember this day for as long as he lived?"
8. Think back to your purpose for reading. What's challenging for Little Diego in this story? How does he react? How do others support him? What does Little Diego learn?
9. What was the "gift from Papá Diego" that give the book its title? Why do you think that?
10. Does this family remind you of your family? Why or why not?
11. How do you think the illustrator decided which parts of the story to show with clay? Give an example of an illustration that shows an event that happened in the story. Give an example of an illustration that shows an idea from a character's imagination. Would you have chosen to illustrate the story the same way? Why or why not?

Reader's Response

(Writing Standards, Text Types & Purposes, Strands 1–3 and Production & Distribution of Writing, Strands 4–6)

Use the following questions and writing activities to help students practice active reading and personalize their responses to the book. Suggest that students respond in reader's response journals, essays, or oral discussion. You may also want to set aside time for students to share and discuss their written work.

1. What do you think the author's message to the reader is? What do you think he wanted to

convey to young readers? Why do you think he chose this story to tell?

2. Re-read the author's biography at the end of the book now that you've read the story. Think about the connections between the author's life and the book. Make a list of ways the author included aspects of his own life experiences in this story. Then make a second list of details from your own life experiences you could include in stories you write.
3. Have students make a text-to-self connection. What kind of connections did you make from this book to your own life? What is your role in your own family?
4. Have students make a text-to-text connection. Did you think of any other books while you read *A Gift From Papá Diego/Un regalo de Papá Diego*. Why did you make those connections?
5. Have students make a text-to-world connection. What kind of connections did you make from this book to what you have seen in the world or on the news? Why did *A Gift From Papá Diego/Un regalo de Papá Diego* make you think of that?
6. What is one big thought that you have after reading this book? Think about different character changes, the setting, and the relationships. What did you learn from reading *A Gift From Papá Diego/Un regalo de Papá Diego*?
7. What different type of conflicts are presented in *A Gift From Papá Diego/Un regalo de Papá Diego*? Discuss Diego's conflicts within himself, his family, and conflicts in the world. Compare and contrast the different conflicts within the text.
8. Make a list of "a-ha moments" Diego had in this story. Use a two-column chart. List the experience that changed Diego's thinking or made him decide to take a certain action, and what happened as a result.
9. Which character in this book would you most like to eat dinner with? Share several reasons. Include your thinking about the characters' traits based on their actions in the story.
10. Imagine Diego grows up and becomes a father and grandfather himself. How might his childhood memories of this birthday influence his decisions and actions? Write about at least two things he might do or say, and why you think that.

Multilingual Learner Teaching Activities

(Speaking & Listening Standards, Comprehension & Collaboration, Strands 1–3 and Presentation of Knowledge & Ideas, Strands 4–6)
(Language Standards, Vocabulary Acquisition & Use, Strands 4–6)

These strategies might be helpful to use with students who are English Learners and multilingual learners. It is also important to stress that the Spanish used in this book is considered Mexican-American Spanish and that may or may not resonate with all students. Words can hold different meanings in other types of Spanish around the world .

1. Assign ML students to partner-read the story with strong English readers/speakers. Students can alternate reading between pages, repeat passages after one another, or listen to the more fluent reader.
2. Have each student write three questions about the story. Then let students pair up and discuss the answers to the questions.

3. Depending on students' level of English proficiency, after the first reading:
 - Review the illustrations in order and have students summarize what is happening on each page, first orally, then in writing.
 - Have students work in pairs to retell either the plot of the story or key details. Then ask students to write a short summary, synopsis, or opinion about what they have read.
4. Have students give a short talk about a family member they love.
5. The book contains several content-specific and academic words that may be unfamiliar to students. Based on students' prior knowledge, review some or all of the vocabulary. Expose English Learners to multiple vocabulary strategies. Have students make predictions about word meanings, look up and record word definitions from a dictionary, write the meaning of the word or phrase in their own words, draw a picture of the meaning of the word, list synonyms and antonyms, create an action for each word, and write a meaningful sentence that demonstrates the definition of the word.
6. The book is both in English and in Spanish. Have students read both texts, and compare both. Have students highlight any unknown words in the text, and then record them separately. Have students look up their definitions and share their knowledge about these words, if applicable.
7. Have students identify true cognates throughout the book. Students can begin with one to two pages and gradually increase to a chapter(s) where students highlight true cognates and determine the meaning to the word if they do not already know it. This can also be a great opportunity to also discuss false cognates with students. If time allows, have students reflect on the cognates that they found. Did they know the word in English? Did they know the word in Spanish? If it was an unknown word in English, did the identification of the Spanish cognate help them define the word? Consult ¡Colorin Colorado! for more ideas on how to use cognates in the classroom with MLs: <https://www.colorincolorado.org/using-cognates-ells>.
8. Additional resources to support multilingual students is: <https://www.multilinguallearning-toolkit.org/>.

Actividades en Español para Apoyo en Programas Bilingües y de Inmersión Dual

(Speaking & Listening Standards, Comprehension & Collaboration, Strands 1–3 and Presentation of Knowledge & Ideas, Strands 4–6) (Language Standards, Vocabulary Acquisition & Use, Strands 4–6) For the CCSS in Spanish, please check out <https://commoncore-espanol.sdcoe.net/CCSSen-Espanol/SLA-Literacy>

1. Asigne el libro *A Gift From Papá Diego/Un regalo de Papá Diego* a sus estudiantes. Coloque dos estudiantes juntos para leer el libro en voz alta. Compare las palabras en inglés y en español. ¿Cómo se comparan las palabras? Los estudiantes pueden practicar las palabras que tengan dificultad en pronunciar. Estudiantes pueden tener un cuaderno con las palabras difíciles para hacer referencia en el futuro.
2. Durante el tiempo de lectura, haga preguntas de comprensión a los estudiantes en inglés y en español para medir el nivel de comprensión en los dos idiomas. Preguntas pueden incluir: ¿de qué se trata el cuento? ¿Conectaste con uno de los personajes en el cuento? ¿Por qué sí o

no? ¿Qué parte te gusta más en el cuento?

3. Elija palabras de vocabulario. Los libros ilustrados bilingües son una excelente manera para que sus estudiantes aprendan nuevas palabras de vocabulario porque el idioma se presenta en contexto. Si es posible, haga fotocopias de las páginas. Estudiantes pueden usar subrayadores en un color para inglés y un color para español para las palabras nuevas. También, puede anotar las palabras en un póster para referencia. Reflexione con sus estudiantes sobre cuales palabras ya sabían y cuales palabras aprendieron.
4. En casa los estudiantes pueden pre-leer el libro con sus familias y puede sugerir que lean el libro juntos. Esto ayuda a practicar la lectura y a aprender de los dos idiomas, inglés y español.
5. El uso de cognados puede ser útil en libros bilingües, en español y en inglés. En esta actividad estudiantes pueden buscar cognados en el libro. Los estudiantes pueden trabajar en parejas para identificar y formar una lista si las palabras son cognados verdaderos o falsos. Al final de la actividad es importante distinguir como clase la lista de los cognados verdaderos o falsos. Estas actividades solo son sugerencias.

Puede encontrar más recursos para apoyar las clases de inmersión dual y bilingües. Puede leer mas en (<https://blog.leeandlow.com/2013/11/04/using-dual-language-and-bilingual-books-in-third-and-fourth-grade/>)

Social and Emotional Learning

(Reading Standards, Key Ideas & Details, Strands 1-3 and Craft & Structure, Strands 4-6)

(Speaking & Listening Standards, Comprehension & Collaboration, Strands 1-3 and Presentation of Knowledge & Ideas, Strand 4)

(Writing Standards, Text Types & Purposes, Strands 1-2 and Production & Distribution of Writing, Strands 4-6)

(Language Standards, Vocabulary Acquisition & Use, Strands 6)

Social and emotional learning involves being aware of and regulating emotions for healthy development. In addition to understanding one's own feelings, strong socio-emotional development allows individuals to develop empathy for others and to establish and maintain relationships.

Use the following prompts to help students study the socio-emotional aspects of this book.

1. What Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) skills do the characters exhibit over the course of the book? Some examples of SEL skills include problem-solving, grit and perseverance, self-regulation, and perspective taking. How do they demonstrate these skills?
2. Have students work in small groups to imagine different characters' perspectives on the same situation. For instance, reflect on the idea that "Diego secretly wishes to be able to fly to Chihuahua." Have small groups each focus on the characters of Diego, Gabriella, Mamá, Diego's father, and Papá Diego. Have them each draw the character's face on a poster with a thought bubble to fill in what that character was (or could have been) thinking about the situation, from their perspective.
3. Use sticky notes to label the emotions of various characters at different points in the book. Talk about how we can often infer characters' emotions from their reactions to events. Have students choose an emotion that interests them: happiness, sadness, fear, anxiety, frustration,

hope, perseverance, regret, and so on. Illustrate or act out what that emotion looks like in *A Gift From Papá Diego/Un regalo de Papá Diego*.

4. Do you think the author wants the characters in this book to be role models for young people or an example of caution? Why or why not, for each character?

INTERDISCIPLINARY ACTIVITIES

(Introduction to the Standards, page 7: Students who are college and career ready must be able to build strong content knowledge, value evidence, and use technology and digital media strategically and capably)

Use some of the following activities to help students integrate their reading experiences with other curriculum areas. These can also be used for extension activities, for advanced readers, and for building a home-school connection.

Writing and ELA

(Reading Standards, Key Ideas and Details, Strands 1–3, Craft and Structure, Strands 4–6, Integration of Knowledge & Ideas, Strands 7–9, Range of Reading of Text Complexity, Strand 10)

(Writing Standards, Text Types & Purposes, Strands 1–3, Production & Distribution of Writing, Strands 4 and 6, Research to Build & Present Knowledge, Strands 7–9, Range of Writing, Strand 10)

(Speaking and Listening Standards, Comprehension and Collaboration, Strands 1–3, Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas, Strands 4–6)

- **Have small groups act out key scenes from the text.** Encourage students to use both the dialogue in the text and the illustrations to help them decide on characters' lines, gestures, and actions. Talk about how to incorporate characters' facial expressions and body language to convey their emotions.
- **Read the sequel to this story, *The Dog Who Loved Tortillas/La perrita que le encantaban las tortillas*** (<https://www.leeandlow.com/books/the-dog-who-loved-tortillas>). Make connections between the characters' experiences, interactions, and reactions to events.
- **Revisit the section of the text when Diego's father talks about how Chihuahua is Papá Diego's "heart," and they are "his heart too."** What does this mean? Have students fill in an outline of a heart with words about what's in their hearts.
- **Explore comic books with students.** What makes them helpful for someone learning to read, or learning to read in a new language? What strategies are important for reading them effectively? Together, learn more about some notable comic book characters in pop culture (superheroes, etc.). Talk about what characteristics make those characters appealing to so many readers over time.
- **Invite students to think more about heroes.** What makes superheroes so appealing to so many people? How are they different from real-life heroes? Have students share about their own heroes, during a discussion and/or in writing.

Social Studies

(Reading Standards, Key Ideas and Details, Strands 1–3, Craft and Structure, Strands 4–6, Integration of Knowledge & Ideas, Strands 7–9, Range of Reading of Text Complexity, Strand 10)

(Writing Standards, Text Types & Purposes, Strands 1–3, Production & Distribution of Writing, Strands 4 and 6, and Research to Build & Present Knowledge, Strands 7–9, Range of Writing, Strand 10)

(Speaking and Listening Standards, Comprehension and Collaboration, Strands 1–3, Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas, Strands 4–6)

- **Use a map to find the locations mentioned in the book: Chihuahua, Mexico, and El Paso, Texas.** Learn more about each location from the author's note or additional research. Mark the route between the two places, accounting for a real border-crossing location. Use the scale on a map to calculate the distance between the two places. Use a mapping app to calculate expected travel time by various modes of transport.
- **Look at photos of the food and drink described in the book.** Have students research recipes for the items that interest them. If possible in your setting, prepare and taste one of the items.
- **Have students learn more about requirements for crossing the international border closest to your location.** Have them imagine a family member lived on the other side of the border. What would be the requirements/options for that family member to visit for different lengths of time? Would that family member be legally allowed to move across the border? Why or why not?

Science

(Reading Standards, Integration of Knowledge & Ideas, Strands 7–9) (Writing Standards, Text Types & Purposes, Strands 1–2 and Research to Build & Present Knowledge, Strands 7–9) (Speaking & Listening Standards, Comprehension & Collaboration, Strands 1–3)

Learn more about flight. What makes birds able to fly? What makes airplanes able to fly? What makes it impossible for humans to fly? Have students create a chart and/or visual display to explain their findings.

Math

(Standards for Mathematical Practice 1 and 4) (Speaking and Listening Standards, Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas, Strands 4 and 5) (Reading Standards, Integration of Knowledge & Ideas, Strand 7)

Create story problems about elapsed time using the travel context from the book. For instance: "If Papá Diego took a bus that left Chihuahua at 1 PM and the journey to El Paso takes 5 hours, what time would his bus arrive?"

Art/Media

(Reading Standards, Integration of Knowledge and Ideas, Strands 7 and 9)

(Writing Standards, Text Types & Purposes, Strands 1-3, Production & Distribution of Writing, Strand 4, and Research to Build & Present Knowledge, Strands 7-9, Range of Writing, Strand 10)

(Speaking and Listening Standards, Comprehension and Collaboration, Strands 1-3, Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas, Strands 4-6)

- **After completing the ELA extension activity about heart maps, have students create a visual representation of their heart map.**
- **After completing the ELA extension activity about heroes, have students create a portrait of their own hero, real or imagined.**
- **After completing the ELA extension about exploring comic books, have students try out creating their own comic strip that conveys a personal dream or hope, or that of a book character.** Talk about how comic strip illustrations and text formatting can help convey characters' emotions.
- **Have students explore using clay to illustrate story events and themes.** Have students create an item from clay to represent an important item, character, or concept in a book they're reading independently. Reflect on the experience and talk about the pros and

cons of using clay as an illustration medium.

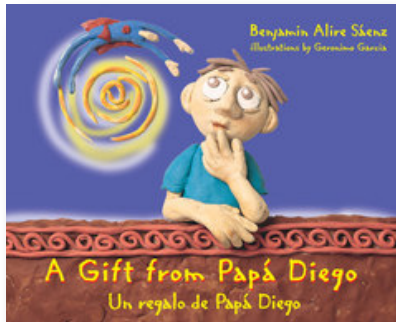
School-Home Connection

(Reading Standards, Integration of Knowledge and Ideas, Strands 7 and 9)

(Writing Standards, Text Types & Purposes, Strands 1-3, Production & Distribution of Writing, Strand 4, and Research to Build & Present Knowledge, Strands 7-9, Range of Writing, Strand 10)

(Speaking and Listening Standards, Comprehension and Collaboration, Strands 1-3, Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas, Strands 4-6)

- **Review the different ways Diego and his family celebrated his birthday—special foods, music, stories, gifts, a family visitor, etc.** Have students work with a family member to write and/or draw about how their family celebrate birthdays or another special day. (Take extra care with your wording if your class includes families that do not or cannot celebrate birthdays.) Share responses at school.
- **As a class, develop interview questions for students to ask an older family member at home about their childhood.** Include questions inspired by Diego's enjoyment of hearing the story of the day he was born, though encourage families to choose or interpret questions in ways comfortable for them



Ordering Information

🌐 General Order Information:

leeandlow.com/contact/ordering

🔒 Secure Online Ordering:

leeandlow.com/books/a-gift-from-papa-diego

☎ **By Phone:** 212-779-4400 ext. 25

📠 **By Fax:** 212-683-1894

✉ **By Mail:**

Lee & Low Books, 95 Madison Avenue,
New York, NY 10016

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Benjamin Alire Sáenz was born in 1954 in Old Picacho, a small farming village outside of Las Cruces, New Mexico, forty-two miles north of the U.S. / Mexico border. He was the fourth of seven children and was brought up in a traditional Mexican-American Catholic family. He entered the seminary in 1972, a decision that was as much political as it was religious. After concluding his theological studies at the University of Louvain, he was ordained a Catholic priest. Three and a half years later, he left the priesthood. At the age of 30, he entered the University of Texas at El Paso. He later received a fellowship at the University of Iowa. In 1988, he received a Wallace E. Stegner Fellowship in poetry from Stanford University. In 1993, he returned to the border to teach in the bilingual MFA program at UTEP.

Sáenz is the author of a previous book of poetry, *Calendar of Dust*, which won an American Book Award. Cinco Puntos published two of his other books of poetry called *Elegies in Blue* and the now out of print, *Dark and Perfect Angels*. His most recent book of poetry, *The Book of What Remains*, was published by Copper Canyon Press in 2010. He is the author of numerous novels, books for children and young adults as well as a previous collection of short stories. His award winning young adult novels are *Sammy & Juliana in Hollywood*, *He Forgot to Say Good-bye*, and *Last Night I Sang to the Monster*. His adult novels include *Carry Me Like Water*, *The House of Forgetting*, *In Perfect Light*, and *Names on a Map*.

ABOUT THE ILLUSTRATOR

Gerónimo Garcia is a highly successful and internationally recognized graphic designer. Like he did for Sáenz's highly successful *A Gift for Papa Diego* (60,000 in print) he hand-crafted the little clay figures and created the colorful book design in *The Dog Who Loves Tortillas*. He lives in El Paso, TX.

ABOUT LEE & LOW BOOKS

LEE & LOW BOOKS is the largest children's book publisher specializing in diversity and multiculturalism. Our motto, "about everyone, for everyone," is as urgent today as it was when we started in 1991. It is the company's goal to meet the need for stories that children of color can identify with and that all children can enjoy. The right book can foster empathy, dispel stereotypes, prompt discussion about race and ethnicity, and inspire children to imagine not only a world that includes them, but also a world where they are the heroes of their own stories. Discover more at leeandlow.com.